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UNCLAS RANGOON 001304

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EAP/MLS; PACOM FOR FPA; USDA FOR FAS, APHIS

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TAGS: [EAGR](#) [EAID](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [SOCI](#) [TBIO](#) [BM](#) [CACS](#)

SUBJECT: BURMA AI UPDATE: NOVEMBER 17, 2005

REF: A. RANGOON 1275 AND PREVIOUS

[1](#)B. RANGOON 1265

[1](#)1. SUMMARY: We have met in the past week with the Minister of Health and other embassies to gather information on AI and to coordinate planning. We have seen reporting from the Burmese media, closely controlled by the GOB, raising public awareness of AI issues. End Summary.

[1](#)2. On November 7, conoff met with counterparts from the German and U.K. embassies to coordinate embassies' planning for possible AI outbreaks in Burma. They discussed drug stockpiling for staff and resident nationals, use of protective gear, evacuation plans, and travel advisories. The German, Italian, and U.K. embassies are all stockpiling Tamiflu for their direct hire and locally engaged staff, as well as all family members and their small populations of locally resident nationals. The German and U.K. embassies plan to order masks and protective gear as well. The EU embassies will use the WHO alert levels as their triggers for responding to AI outbreaks.

[1](#)3. On November 8, the Minister of Health, Dr. Kyaw Myint, described GOB plans for combating AI to the Charge (ref A) in cooperation with the Ministry of Livestock and Fisheries. The GOB-controlled media has begun broadcasting public awareness messages on television and through newspapers, asking the public to inform the authorities about possible outbreaks of AI. The Minister of Health assured the Charge that he would work closely with the WHO, the FAO, and foreign missions to ensure maximum transparency in dealing with AI in Burma.

[1](#)4. On November 10, poloff met Dr. Adik Wibowo, the WHO representative for Burma, and Dr. Tin Win Kyaw, State Health Director for Mon State. Dr. Adik said the WHO seeks to establish an "AI action group" for Burma to consist of representatives from the GOB, relevant UN agencies, and key foreign missions. She has sought approval from the Minister of Health before starting up the group. Dr. Tin Win Kyaw mentioned that the Livestock Breeding and Veterinary Department has "rapid test kits" for analyzing samples taken from suspected cases of AI in animals and has used these kits during recent suspected outbreaks in Mon State. He said that the Ministry of Health lacks similar testing kits for suspected cases among humans. (Note: As reported earlier (ref A), the Minister of Health would welcome assistance in this area. End Note.)

[1](#)5. COMMENT: Other embassies share our view that the GOB has a very limited capacity to deal with a major AI outbreak. We have agreed with the German and U.K. embassies to monitor the situation closely and share information regularly. The GOB's sudden move to a new capital (ref B) will likely disrupt the ministries' ability to cope with this challenge. End Comment.

VILLAROSA